



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**CONTACT:**  
Dr. Kelly K. Browning, Ph.D.  
(813) 728-3998  
Sgt. Denise Joslin  
(818) 240-8200

## **California Aims to Keep Teens Alive**

*California agencies kick off California Teen Safe Driving Week  
and National Distracted Driving Awareness Month*

**Burbank, Calif.** – (April 2, 2013) – The California Highway Patrol (CHP), Impact Teen Drivers, the California Office of Traffic Safety and Burbank city officials joined today to raise awareness of a public health epidemic: reckless and distracted driving. Reckless and distracted driving is the number one killer of teens in the United States, and in California alone, 20 percent of collisions are caused by distracted drivers.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 535 young adults between the ages of 16-24 were killed in traffic collisions in California in 2010, representing nearly 20 percent of the total number of people killed on the state's roadways. Nationally, drivers ages 16 to 19 are three times more likely than older drivers to be involved in a fatal collision, according to statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2010, collisions in which distracted driving was a factor killed about 2,700 people between the ages of 16 to 19 – more than seven per day.

“Driving a vehicle is a task that requires a driver’s full attention. Inattention, combined with the inexperience of our young drivers, can be deadly,” said CHP Commissioner Joe Farrow. “The consequences of distracted and reckless driving are real. The moment we step into a vehicle, we have to ask ourselves if sending that text or dialing that phone number or any behavior that takes our focus off the road is worth the risk.”

During National Distracted Driving Month, law enforcement agencies across the country are raising awareness of the dangers of distracted driving, and in California, officials are emphasizing the need for a strong combination of education and enforcement to change driving attitudes and behaviors. They also emphasize that distracted driving injuries and fatalities are 100 percent preventable.

“We lose sight of the fact that everyday behaviors we see on the roadways are a threat to all motorists,” said Impact Teen Drivers Executive Director Dr. Kelly Browning. “Texting, eating, applying make-up, reaching for an object – these split-second decisions take our focus away from the act of driving, and create the perfect condition for potential distracted driving crashes.”



As part of the kick-off for California Teen Safe Driving Week (April 1 – 7), parents, educators, elected officials, affected families, and partnering agencies gathered at John Burroughs High School in Burbank to witness firsthand the dangers of distracted driving. On a closed-course track set up by the Mercedes-Benz Driving Academy, teens tried to navigate around cones while experiencing the impairment caused by everyday distractions.

“It’s always an eye-opening experience for teens to see the tremendous impact distracted driving has on their ability to handle the wheel and the vehicle,” said Carolyn Duchene, Director of the Mercedes-Benz Driving Academy. “The trail of knocked over cones the teens leave behind on the course gives a pretty clear visual of what might happen if they drive distracted out on the roadway.”

Following the event, teens also had the opportunity to meet with family members who have lost loved ones in distracted driving collisions.

“If the knocked over cones aren’t visually impactful enough, the sorrow and grief of a mother or father who lost a teenage daughter or son definitely is,” acknowledged Browning. “We don’t do this to scare teens or the driving public. We do it to show the reality of decisions we all make behind the wheel. Our hope is to change behavior and make people recognize the very real consequences of their actions.”

The event was made possible by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety.

#### **ABOUT IMPACT TEEN DRIVERS**

*Impact Teen Drivers was created through the combined effort of the California Association of Highway Patrolmen, the California Teachers Association, and California Casualty to raise awareness among teens, parents, and communities about the consequences of poor decision making while driving. For more information about Impact Teen Drivers, or to find out how you can become involved, please e-mail [info@impactteendrivers.org](mailto:info@impactteendrivers.org) or call 916-733-7432.*

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